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The Good Life

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Not Your Average 'Joe Schmo' Car

I recently heard someone compare the click of a Chanel lipstick tube to the sound of a Jaguar door closing. Luxury compared to luxury — albeit on vastly different financial scales. The ideal car, of course, is in the eye of the beholder. While some would opt for an Aston Martin, others would choose a BMW, a Mercedes Benz, or perhaps a Bentley. Still others would choose a car known for its speed capabilities, its legend or its uniqueness. If price is no object and you're looking to stand out from the crowd, here are some options to consider.

BMW 750-Series

The 2012 7-series was classified by US News as #5 among the nation's "Super Luxury" vehicles and the 2013 version is no less super or luxurious. The 750Lx and 750 Lxi boast 445 horsepower from their 4.4-liter, V-8 engine with TwinPower Turbo technology. That means this "driver's luxury sedan," as BMW refers to it, is not only elegant and comfortable, but this superstar has some get up and go.

According to Eric Robare, New Vehicle Sales Manager of Kelly BMW, the 750 Lxi is the most popular variant of the 7-series for Central Ohio buyers. In BMW's naming system, the "L" refers to the car's long wheel base (almost 6-inches longer than the 750i, and "x" means it has BMW's xDrive (all-wheel drive) system. ("I" simply means it has a fuel injected engine.)

The car's Dynamic Drive Control, Robare said, is a popular feature because it allows drivers to select between four driving modes (comfort, normal, sport and sport-plus) that affect suspension and throttle. While it would be difficult for this car to provide an

uncomfortable ride, there is definitely a difference between the sport-plus and comfort options, so let the wild-child or the sophisticate in you determine which option to choose on any given day.

While we're speaking of comfort, we can't overlook the 750Lx's or 750Lxi's interior. With backseat leg-room that would allow Yao Ming to stretch out comfortably, this model will make a trip to the family reunion or cross-country vacations an experience to enjoy. For those whose legs aren't as long as Ming's, there are adjustable/removable foot rests for backseat passengers. There also are hidden automated window shades for that chauffeured limo effect or for simply keeping out the sun.

Soft leather seats with variable support, individual climate controls in the back seats as well as the front, and a sound system that lets your passengers close their eyes and feel they're in the recording studio are at the top of the list for this car's creature comforts. Starting at \$90,000 for the Li and \$93,000 for the Lxi, this automobile offers elegance, power and car-lover passion all rolled into one

BMW 7-Series

glorious vehicle. And as with all BMW’s, a 4-year/50,000 mile free full maintenance plan is just the icing on the proverbial cake. The plan covers brakes, rotors, oil services, tune-ups, wiper blades — effectively everything except tires, according to Robare.

“The BMW 7 series exemplifies the true meaning of luxury in a full-size sports sedan. For the owner who demands the best combination of luxury and features in a “driver’s” car, the 7 series is the best option,” contends Robare. Who is that owner? According to BMW, the “average” 7-series owner is a 55 year old male, college grad with a pre-tax income of \$410,597 — but if you don’t fit the profile, they’ll still be willing to sell you one of these beauties.

Oh, and if you want to spend a little extra, your first drive in your new car can be on the Autobahn. Be introduced to your vehicle at the renowned BMW Welt and enjoy exclusive VIP tours of BMW facilities. When your trip is finished, arrangements will be made to have your vehicle brought back to the states. You’ll pick up the tab for the visit, but according to Robare the base price “savings” is \$6,460 off MSRP for European delivery.

Aston Martin One-77

Introduced in 2009, there are only 77 of these cars made each year, but considering they have a price tag of between \$1.5 and \$3 million, there probably isn’t a need for many more than that.

The Aston Martin One-77 is a culmination of a goal to “create a car closer to art than the automobile,” according to company officials. It has a naturally aspirated 7.3-liter V12 engine that offers 750 horsepower and 533 lb-ft of torque — a little more power than you really need for a trip to the office or golf course, but it definitely will make it a pleasure to get there. Top speed, by the way, is listed at 221 mph.

Aston Martins, with their creamy soft hand-stitched leather interiors and hand-crafted bodies and engines, are basically



Aston Martin One-77

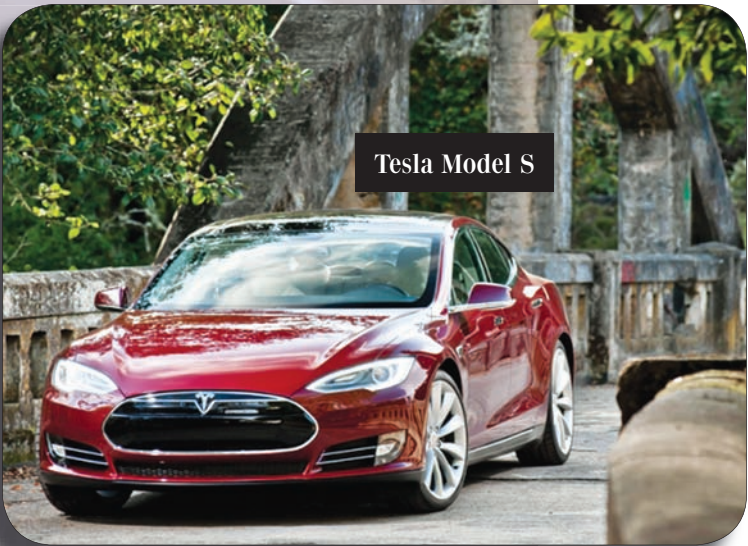
one of a kind vehicles. But to take that “one-off” concept a step further, Aston Martin offers its Q program that allows the buyer to finish his car in a way that reflects his taste, lifestyle and personality. You can choose from a range of unique exterior paint, interior leather and thread color collections, all designed to add an extra level of personalization. That personalization, however, is what kicks up the base model price of \$1.5 million to the \$3 million neighborhood. Nice neighborhood — really nice car.



Bentley Mulsanne

Bentley Mulsanne

With its 6752cc twin turbo-charged engine producing 505 horsepower this exquisite piece of machinery goes from 0 to 60 in 5.1 seconds. Not bad for a car that weighs almost 6,000 pounds (listed weight is 5,976). Bentley Motors says the Mulsanne’s design is a unique fusion of sportiness, coach-built elegance and solidity.



Tesla Model S

Inside this mansion on wheels you’ll find carefully positioned mood lighting and knurled stainless steel, smooth wood veneers and leather chosen from herds in cooler climates where the lack of insects means blemish-free hides. The car is a piece of art inside and out, as evidenced by the “Hand-crafted by...” plaque on the doorsill and the frosted glass bottle cooler with three hand-blown and hand-cut lead crystal champagne flutes that hide between the back passenger seats.

Who would drive a car of this ilk? In Central Ohio, the typical Bentley buyer is a “successful business owner,” not a professional athlete nor an old-money blueblood, according to Shawn Sheppard, Bentley Sales Consultant for Midwestern Auto Group’s Bentley Columbus. He said that in the U.S. market there probably are about 200 Mulsanne’s sold each year, with the average Bentley dealership selling only two or three annually.

“At the top level, you have Bentley and Rolls Royce. Bentley would be the gentleman’s car. Bentley is a little more understated,” Sheppard noted. With an MSRP of \$325,600 this “understated” car is an investment for the true connoisseur, and it is clearly what it touts in its brochures: A very modern classic.

Tesla Model S

These handsome, environmentally friendly cars are once again rolling

out the company’s doors despite an alleged supplier issue that stalled business this summer. About the same time, money issues created concerns among some buyers and investors about the future of the cars, but CEO Elon Musk says Tesla is in good shape and is in the process of repaying a \$465 million loan from the U.S. Department of Energy.

Tesla says its Model S Performance cars pack 416 hp and can go from 0 to 60 in 4.4 seconds – without hesitation and without gasoline. The Model S can be plugged into a 240 volt outlet, standard 120 volt outlet or public station. The company says that with a high power wall connector and twin chargers, a Model S can be recharged at the rate of 62 miles-range per hour. A fifty-percent charge in thirty minutes can be achieved with a Tesla Super-charger. Base price for the standard Model S is \$49,900 and the line’s top version, the Model S Signature is based at \$97,900. ♣

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Erika Taylor Urban Spa

Unwind Time

It's probably safe to say that between decking the halls, accommodating out-of-town relatives, cooking, planning, shopping ... the list goes on and on ... we all deserve some time during the holidays to unwind. Think spa.

This year's spa trends range from a perfect pedicure to medical grade skin treatments, and implement practices from around the world to restore you to your beautiful, relaxed self.

Start off on the right foot

We put our feet through a lot, whether it's staying on them all day at work or contorting them to fit into those cute new pumps. For some of us, it's important to give back to our feet, soaking them in warm bubbling water and letting a trusted spa employee massage out the tension and strip away dead skin.

Columbus' Erika Taylor Urban Spa offers luxury pedicures and boasts that those pedicures go far beyond painted toenails. These professionals want to understand what you and your feet do all day. "It's really about understanding the person's lifestyle," said spa owner Erika Taylor.

The way you workout or the length of time you spend in those strappy heels can change the areas of your feet that require the most attention. Your lifestyle may even play a role in determining the type of polish you use. Shellac polish has a reputation for being long-lasting and having no dry time and those factors have pushed it to the forefront of the pedicure trends. The polish helps combat the hassle of trudging through Ohio snow with a fresh pedicure because it dries instantly, meaning you can lace up those boots and avoid cold snowy toes.

Taylor noted that the number of men getting pedicures is growing, a factor she attributed to the more private nature of modern spas. Her spa and many other urban spas are starting to expand and feature private pedicure cabanas so those being pampered feel less exposed. The spa's pedicures range from \$40-\$125.

Just what the doctor ordered

Whether you are looking to put off getting injectables, prolong the life of the ones you have, or simply need a stronger skin treatment, the spa industry is expanding to meet your needs.

Spa Walden in Aurora, Ohio, recently added a doctor to its team, who offers injectables once a month. Having a doctor on staff also allows for more intense skin treatments and the use of medical-grade products. "Because of our doctor on our team, we have pharmaceutical-level skin care products and the chemical peels are becoming really popular," said Spa Walden front desk manager Karen Scherma, who noted that the chemical peels are a complementary incentive with any 90-minute facial service at the spa.

Erika Taylor Urban Spa is also moving toward more intense skin treatment. The spa offers a non-invasive laser that helps with acne, discoloration and crow's feet. "It's a good option for people who aren't ready for surgery, who don't want to be getting injections or fillers and Botox yet, or who maybe want to prolong their injectable," said Taylor.

Taylor is certified to apply the HydraFacial MD, a skin resurfacing treatment that exfoliates and extracts all build up from your pores before hydrating the skin and filling any fine lines. "In 30 to 45 minutes, their skin looks completely corrected, really gorgeous, and they're in and out and they can go right back to work, put makeup on, whatever they need to do," Taylor said. The treatments start at \$175 for the HydraFacial MD Lite and \$295 for the HydraFacial MD.

Exotic treatments

Spa Walden offers its patrons a variety of advanced spa treatments, from table Thai and bamboo massages to craniosacral therapy and Vichy showers. Craniosacral therapy, often considered a form of alternative medicine, involves gently applying pressure around the head and spine to rid the body of stress and relieve migraines, tension, and chronic pain in the neck and back. Spa Walden's Craniosacral therapy starts at \$185 for one hour.

The spa's Vichy shower is also popular. The shower is in a suite with five shower heads rhythmically dropping warm water onto a patron, who lays on a massage table in a wrap or body scrub. This provides the relaxation so many of us find in a warm rain. After you're rinsed, a practitioner will take you right into a massage, which can take place on the water table itself or on a dry table.

Beauty starts at the top

A massage can relax your muscles and wraps can rejuvenate your skin, but a whole spa experience should refresh your mind as well. Spa Walden gives its patrons 30 minutes before each treatment to sit in their private suite and relax in a bubbling tub or steaming shower. Most spas also offer a relaxing atmosphere, removing brash noises and colors to help soothe your mind while being pampered.

Taylor said everyone's idea of bliss is different and it's important for spas to be accommodating of all types of bliss. A friendly conversation with the person kneading the tension out of your back may relax some, while others prefer just soft music to calm their senses. Most spas offer customizable treatments and representatives from both the urban spa and the traditional spa said it's important to let your service provider know what setting will help you get the most relaxation out of your visit.

Some locations provide seating areas in quiet gardens or fireplaces for those who simply do not want to leave. Others include an upbeat bar or restaurant to allow patrons to unwind in more social situations.

"We really have to take the time to understand what the guest wants, because my bliss and your bliss are two different things. We help you find that bliss, whether its an hour or four hours for your spa day," Taylor said. "Everyone should be able to be beautiful." ♣



Nationwide Arena Suite

Ready For A Night On The Town

If you're looking for a big night on the town, or perhaps a private soiree at home, and money's no object, there are plenty of options around Central Ohio. Whether it's a sporting event or concert enjoyed from a private suite, a limo ride to a downtown play with front-row seats or a catered gala for some of your closest friends and family members, you can live it up large in Columbus.

Columbus is lucky enough to have one of the nicest sports arenas in the country with Nationwide Arena, home of the National Hockey League's Columbus Blue Jackets, big-time concert acts and other shows and events. And what better way to enjoy them than from a private suite with leather seating, private catering and a stocked wet bar. The suites vary in size but typically accommodate 12 to 48 guests. The cost for Blue Jackets game packages vary depending on your tastes.

"We have three different packages. You can get pizzas and hot dogs and salty snacks and you can go upscale and get your beef tenderloin, shrimp cocktail and that

kind of stuff," said John Browne, senior vice president and chief marketing officer for the Blue Jackets.

A basic package for 24 persons for one game in one of the arena's party suites starts at \$3,700 and can go to more than \$9,000 for 48 people with the upscale food and beverage package. But for that price, expect to be pampered. "We have plenty of wait staff and a personal representative to help plan the event and be there that night," said Browne.

If you're looking for a more cultured evening than a hockey game or rock concert then perhaps an evening watching a Broadway play is in order. A season package for five shows at either the Palace Theatre or Ohio Theatre in one of the best seats will cost \$464.

Want to ride to dinner and the play in total comfort? Columbus has a variety of limousine services that charge between \$65 and \$100 per hour. If it's a big group a limo service such as Coach Transportation offers a luxurious

By Rick Adamczak



The Ivory Room

26-passenger bus with two high-definition TVs, a DVD player, a mirrored ceiling and fiber optic lighting.

If a private party is in your plans Central Ohio has numerous venues, from upscale restaurants and banquet facilities to country clubs. One of the newest venues is The Ivory Room on the south end of downtown Columbus.

Located on the sixth floor of the Miranova condominium building, The Ivory Room, which just opened in September, offers spectacular views of the Columbus skyline. The room can hold up to 300 people and is operated by Cameron Mitchell Catering. Everything from formal sit-down dinners to dance parties are offered there, and that includes themed parties — maybe a trendy night club atmosphere or a winter wonderland.

"The experience starts right from the time the guests pull up in their cars and they're greeted by (staff) in themed outfits who can escort them right up to the room," said Melissa Johnson, director of catering for Cameron Mitchell. "We were thinking, 'How can we go above just a valet?'"

Once in the room the experience continues. "We transform the room into that theme, that vision, for the night," said Johnson. That experience includes all of the sights, scents and sounds. "We even have special aromas. We're allowing for all of those elements from the moment you walk into the room," said Johnson. "We're trying to hit all of the senses."

A party here may include a serving bar carved from a block of ice or ice sculptures as table centerpieces, and the menu runs the gamut. Beef tenderloin, sea bass, scallops and palm butter, double-stuffed chicken, crab — nearly anything one might want. The cost of renting The Ivory Room (including food, beverages and staff-

ing) during prime season — April through October and December — starts at \$20,000 for a Saturday night or \$28,000 for an entire Saturday. Friday nights start at \$10,000 and weeknights start at \$4,000.

If playing host is more your style, hire one of Columbus' many top of the line personal chefs or caterers to provide the food at your house party. Someone such as New Albany private chef Teresa Johnson will come to your home and cook and serve your personally chosen selection of dinner items.

"Even if it's just a dinner party of four, we'll sit down with them and go over what they want and even how it's going to look," said Johnson. "It's a very personal service ... we're flexible. We cater to their needs."

She even cleans up the kitchen, leaving it sparkling when the party's finished.

Johnson charges \$45 per hour and if she needs an assistant the rate is \$60 per hour, though that doesn't include the cost of the food.

Choose your venue, choose your menu and start partying. ♣



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Home-Made Dreams



Are you ready for a new home? Many of us have ideas about what our dream home would look like, and there are some Central Ohio builders who would be more than willing to help make those dreams come true.

Cooking Up Comfort

“The kitchen is the heartbeat of the home, it’s the center, it’s where everyone gathers,” said Dominic Giordano of Gossing Construction. He noted that it is important to make sure the kitchen is well designed and is as beautiful as it is functional.

Other local builders agree. “People are having us build either a really nice island that they can sit at, or in some cases we’re just building a table that they’re sitting at and that becomes actually a workable island in some cases,” said Vince Ghiloni, owner of Ghiloni Custom Builders Inc., adding that some families even have opted to have both a prep and dining island.

The islands and kitchen cabinetry most often are made of natural hardwoods, such as cherry and walnut, while accents of glass, brick, various tiles and stainless steel complete the picture. “People are getting really fancy on their back splashes,” Ghiloni said. “We’ve done marbles and tumbled marbles for quite some time, but doing a lot of different things for back splashes seems to be a trend.”

Suite Dreams

A master suite gives harried homeowners a place to escape from work, children and the world, so extra creature comforts are highly valued. Giordano said larger closets are a luxury not to be overlooked. Many of today’s master suite’s have bedroom closets that include dressing rooms with corner lounges and sometimes even a separate shoe closet.

In addition, separate his and her bathrooms can give both family members exactly what they want, with one featuring a whirlpool tub and the other centering around a luxury shower. “A lot of people are scrapping the tub all together and going with a luxurious shower,” Giordano said. “People are putting in a shower that’s 4-feet wide with body sprays and a shower head out of the ceiling, because realistically, 99 percent of your bathing is done in the shower.”

He said another special touch for the bathroom is radiant heating for floors, an unseen electric heating system under the bathroom floor that makes those first morning steps into the bathroom — or the first steps out of the shower — a lot more pleasant.

Comfortably Green

Speaking of heat, it seems obvious that a comfortable home has to be warm in the winter and cool in the summer. But the best way to accomplish that may not be so obvious. Ghiloni suggests geothermal heat. “Probably 70 percent of our houses use geothermal heat,” Ghiloni said. The shift to geothermal heating may highlight the trend to “go green” but there are more than environmental benefits to such practices.

While Ghiloni estimated that geothermal installation costs typically are about double the cost of a traditional high energy efficient gas heating system, the government currently offers a 30 percent tax credit to homeowners who purchase the environmentally friendly option. Giordano said with that tax incentive the price difference between geothermal and tradition heating is only about \$4,000-\$5,000.

Techie Touches

It seems nearly everything in our lives has been touched by technology and our window coverings are no exception. Gone are the days of simple, white metal pull-string blinds paired with curtains. Today we can choose blinds in dozens of colors, materials and designs that need no curtains or drapes to accent them — and they can be quite high tech.

Cordless lifting systems have been available for window coverings for years, but they have evolved and believe it or not, there’s an app for that.

“As with the rest of the world’s technology that’s going on, the iPad has applications that are now being used as a way to be able to raise and lower blinds,” said Denise Morrison of Continental Blinds and Care.

The automatic lifting systems also are programmable, allowing you to adjust the settings so the shades are raised and lowered based on the time of day or the temperature of the room. Techniques like these help to trap heat and keep the home warm in the winter or block the sun during summer months — all of which adds up to lower utility bills.

Viewing your windows as pieces of furniture that can be decorated with detail and style and pairing those creations with technology also can add value to a house.

“People are using the window coverings as a way of being able to increase the potential and value on the sale and I would have to say that the automation is something that’s hot, people like it,” Morrison said. “I think some people are a little afraid of it, but it’s not as intimidating as they may think it is.” Continental’s window treatments can range from \$80 to around \$2,000 per window.

The Great Outdoors

Don’t limit your living space to the square footage of your home. Take advantage of your outdoor space to host week-end get-togethers , evening cocktail hours, or even just to gather with family. Swimming pools, according to Ghiloni, are a great entertainment feature.

“At least 50 percent of our houses are putting swimming pools in on the exterior,” he said. “We just finished one that had a swimming pool inside, one of those swim-in-place pools.”



Photo courtesy of Continental Blinds and Care



Photo courtesy of Continental Blinds and Care

But even houses that turn their swimming fun into indoor exercise need some sort of outdoor flair. Large, covered porches and pergolas with fireplaces or firepits give homeowners a place to gather for meals, drinks or just to unwind.

In the end it’s all about comfort. Whether your dream home is big or small, environmentally friendly or traditional, make sure it’s a place you can truly call “home sweet home.” ♣



Photo courtesy of Gossing Construction

Cheers!

A Primer For Buying Your Bubbly

Champagne and celebrations go hand in hand. We start a new year and end an old with a Champagne toast. Champagne pours freely at marriage receptions across the world. A ship is launched with a bottle of Champagne broken against the vessel’s bow. And who can forget those classic movies where the debonair gentlemen in classic tuxedos sip Champagne with their silk evening gown-clad leading ladies? We love it, we appreciate it, but do we really know enough about Champagne to declare ourselves authorities. For those of us who answer “no” to that question, an expert on the subject, Seth Box, director of Champagne, Wine & Spirit Education for Moët Hennessy USA, offers the following Champagne primer exclusively for readers of The Good Life.

Napoleon was quoted as saying that in victory he deserved Champagne, and in defeat, he needed it. In addition to being a timeless and elegant drink, Champagne is relatively easy to understand. There are three primary categories; non vintage, vintage and prestige cuvee. Within each of these categories there are white (blanc) and pink (rosé), and two primary sweetness levels. Almost all the Champagne sold in the U.S. is dry, and labeled as Brut. If you prefer a kiss of sweetness, look for Demi Sec.

By law, Champagne is derived exclusively from Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier and Chardonnay grapes grown in the Champagne region of France. Production of Champagne is so tightly controlled that we are guaranteed it’s 100 percent from the region, made only from approved varieties, hand harvested, bottle fermented and aged a minimum of 15 months for non vintage and 36 for vintage. When you shop outside of Champagne, many of these rules change or do not exist at all. A bit of caution: Beware wines from other countries which put the word Champagne on their label.

Approximately 90 percent of Champagne is non vintage (NV). Simply put, these are the result of blending wines from the current harvest with wines that have been kept in reserve from years past in order to ensure high quality and consistency. Some may be comprised of two or three vintages, others may stretch back 15 years or more. Non vintage Champagne typically offers the highest degree of quality for the price. Vintage Champagne accounts for roughly 10 percent of the region’s production, and are only made when the year was of such exceptional quality that wine makers decided to express their style through the lens of that particular vintage. Vintage Champagne is more selective and tends to command a higher price due to rarity and potential to develop and improve with ageing.

The pinnacle of Champagne quality and longevity is represented by prestige cuvee. These utilize fruit from the finest vineyards, are subject to the highest degree of selection and can take up to a decade to produce. Dom Perignon and Krug

are two of the only houses in the region that focus exclusively on making prestige cuvee. Within non vintage, vintage and prestige cuvee a blanc or rose may be produced. Of the two styles, rosé is much rarer, and represents only 14 percent of U.S. Champagne consumption. The same may be said with regard to sweetness, with the overwhelming majority or rosé falling into the dry or Brut category. White or pink, if you like dry, Brut will be printed on the front of your Champagne label.

When shopping for Champagne, there are a few points to consider. If you are interested in being able to enjoy your bottle now and have the option of keeping it to see how it develops, vintage and prestige cuvee are the best bets. For immediate consumption and a bright, fresh style, non vintage from reliable producers such as Moët and Veuve Clicquot will never disappoint. Regarding rosé, remember that most pink Champagne is dry, not sweet. Even those that do have more sugar, like Moët’s Nectar Imperial Rosé, are not actually very sweet (less sugar in one bottle than in a can of cola) and pair beautifully with spicy and rich cuisine.

A final note on pairings; even though Champagne may be enjoyed without food, don’t be afraid to bring it with you to the table. Its moderate alcohol will never overwhelm a dish, the crisp acidity can cut through any fat, and the bubbles add a beautiful texture. Fried chicken and popcorn are as delicious with Champagne as caviar and sushi. ♣





Eddie Merlot's

at five years old, one of the new kids in town

Steak, Seafood, Wine, Atmosphere & No Worries

Some stop by for the Chateaubriand. Others pop in for the sesame calamari. And for some, it's all about Eddie Merlot's expansive, by-the-glass wine selection. In the five years since the doors of this Polaris Parkway restaurant opened, the eatery has gained a loyal following from those taken by both its fine dining menu and its rich ambiance.

"We have a stunning, elegant environment that is warm and very comfortable," said Vittorio Borgia, Eddie Merlot's general manager. "It's a gorgeous building. If you shut your eyes and then opened them, you would think you were in South Beach or Las Vegas. We have that same care and attention to detail for everything we have on the menu."

Founded by Bill Humphries, a well-known wine connoisseur, Eddie Merlot's specializes in prime aged beef and seafood. Its menu outlines offerings that range from an 18-ounce, 30-day, dry-aged ribeye steak to cedar-plank salmon to rack of lamb to black and bleu sea scallops. Desserts that are prepared tableside "in spectacular fashion" include strawberries Romanoff, bananas Foster and vanilla cognac brownie.

While he is especially fond of the 12-ounce, prime New York strip with Eddie's famous stuffed shrimp, Borgia says the

eatery's most popular dish is the eight-ounce filet with colossal lump crab meat. "It's an amazing dish," he boasts. "It's just phenomenal."

Borgia, who has been in the hospitality industry for nearly 40 years with a bulk of that time spent in Central Ohio, says Eddie Merlot's prides itself on offering exquisite food and exceptional service in an unparalleled atmosphere.

He said the restaurant, which has eight locations in Ohio, Illinois, Indiana and Kentucky, aims not to be judged by price but by the experience of being a guest. "We want to bring back the joy of life," Borgia said. "We try to create an amazing level of comfort." Such efforts, which have been coined as the restaurant's "WOW Factor," have garnered a solid base of repeat and business customers. The Columbus location offers three dining rooms that are ideal for both personal and professional gatherings.

"We have amazing support from the business community," Borgia said, adding that the restaurant's staff especially shines during private functions. "There's an Italian saying 'Mi preoccupi per voi' it means 'Let me worry for you.' We like to take care of all the details." ♣

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Big, Bold Jewelry Takes Center Stage

Bigger is better: Wider bracelets, more pronounced watches, dangling earrings and lariat or chandelier necklaces are the current darlings of the jewelry world and the trend is expected to continue well into 2013.

The emphasis on size is coupled with a heavy use of bright colors in both the gold selection and the stone choices. After years of seeing white gold dominate the market, yellow gold is making a resurgence. Rose gold also is growing in popularity, with its warm tone and ability to bring out a glow in almost any skintone. As for gemstones, they are less traditional, vibrantly colored and large, in eye-popping settings.

Engaging Designs

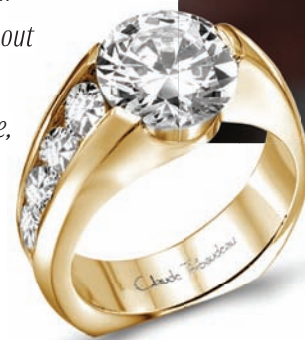
Throughout generations, the mention of an engagement ring has brought to mind images of beautiful, sparkling clear diamonds. This year and heading into 2013, however, high-end designers are trying to change that image by working with colored diamonds, sapphires and rubies.

“I think people that have always wanted to be different have always looked for something like that, but you have to have a stone that’s hard enough. ... I do quite a few sapphire engagement rings,” said Alexander’s Jewelers manager Shane Hampton.

While a traditional blue sapphire is complemented well by the cool tones of white gold, the softer warmth of rose gold highlights the intricate veining and depth of green or red sapphires.



*Tiffany Anniversary
Tanzanite Necklace*



*Claude Thibaudeau
Engagement Ring*

With any stone, halo-style settings offer a line of small diamonds encircling a center gem, the halo style gives its wearers flexibility with the new color trends. Designers can highlight a large diamond with a colorful border or branch out further into the trend by placing color at the center of attention and keeping the tradition of diamonds along the edges.

Montreal-based designer Claude Thibaudeau is mixing tradition with trend by using predominately white gold and diamonds, but accenting his rings with a large center stone and occasionally a touch of yellow gold. Alexander’s features a Thibaudeau engagement ring with a 5 carat center stone. The mounting is priced at about \$9,000 while the stone comes in at \$150,000.

Drop Dead Gorgeous

Necklaces don’t need to be dainty to be pretty. Dangling lariats are elegant and refined while large-stoned pendants bring a decidedly glamorous accent to the wearer.

“You’re seeing a lot of lariats for women,” Hampton said. “That’s the really super-hot trend right now and it’s going to be hot for 2013.”

He carries a line of products from jewelry designer Scott Kay who offers a wide range of these drop-style necklaces, including a dark, sultry lariat encased in black sapphire and priced at \$985.

Tiffany and Co. currently is featuring necklaces with over-sized stones in vivid colors and textures. There are various levels of “oversized,” but if we stick to the bigger is better theme, you might want to consider helping Tiffany celebrate its anniversary.

In honor of its 175th year, the jeweler is featuring necklaces with 175-carate stones. The Tiffany Anniversary tanzanite necklace encircles the wearer’s neck in small round diamonds that then flow down from the front center to a bold, blue tanzanite stone, an astounding look with a total of 175 beautiful carats.

The company known for its little blue boxes and decadent jewelry also this year is featuring a Tiffany Anniversary morganite necklace. The piece juxtaposes a dainty ribbon of diamonds set in platinum with 175 carats of pastel pink cushion morganite. The massive stone is set in a flowing bow of diamonds and topped with a Tiffany Novo diamond.

Arm Candy

“Really, really wide cuff bracelets are the other hot, hot piece for 2013,” Hampton said. Scott Kay’s straight corset cuff bracelet is a beautiful example, combining sterling silver with a heavy leather cording inlay. The bracelet utilizes white sapphire bands to emulate a corset and is priced at \$3,100.

Another line Hampton carries, Sophia by Design, capitalizes on textures using stingray “leather” in thick bands to set off a single large gemstone surrounded by colored diamonds. The prices are dependent upon which gemstone is used, and are generally around \$2,200. ♣



*Scott Kay Large
Corset Cuff*

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Tina Turner once sang about a hardscrabble life rollin' down the river on a giant paddleboat, but these days river cruises are much more comfortable — to the point of being luxurious.

River cruises have been popular in Europe for some time, but now they're starting to get big in the U.S., and there's one practically in our backyard. The large, luxurious American Queen steamboat docks regularly in Cincinnati for trips up and down the Ohio River. The steamboat, the largest river cruise boat in the world, has six decks of posh cabins, fine dining and live entertainment as it makes its way along voyages that last from three to seven days.

If floating along a river isn't your favorite way to connect with Mother Nature, then maybe an amenity-filled home out in the country with a private masseuse or chef in nearby Hocking Hills is for you. The Hocking Hills region has numerous cabins and retreats that are filled with everything from big-screen TVs and hot tubs to elegant dining and even a heli-pad if necessary — close to nature, but hardly roughing it.

So whether it's a luxurious cruise along the Ohio River or a weekend retreat in the hills — or even a getaway to one of America's great golf resorts — there are some very appealing upscale vacation options within an easy drive of Central Ohio, proving that you don't have to travel afar for a luxurious vacation.



A Weekend Or A Week Close-To-Home Getaways

Let's start with the river cruise.

The American Queen offers a variety of Ohio River cruises embarking from Cincinnati to destinations such as Pittsburgh and St. Louis. The steamboat is a stunning beauty, and with a capacity of 400 guests it's so big it easily attracts the attention of residents in the towns it passes. It offers a stately two-story dining room, a theater modeled after Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C. and a pool on the top deck.

"A lot of times people fail to see the great vacation options right in our own backyard. (The steamboat) is an easy luxurious vacation option that's close to home," said Tim Rubacky, senior vice president at American Steamboat. The cruises aboard the American Queen include numerous options for live entertainment, from revue shows and Mark Twain impersonators to rhythm and blues and big band orchestras.

Fares for a five-day cruise vary, from \$1,545 per person for an inside cabin to \$4,595 per person for a suite. The luxury suites are decorated with period antiques and have mahogany French doors that open onto a verandah overlooking the river. A seven-day cruise in a luxury suite is \$6,495 per person. "It's not over the top, but it's certainly lavish," said Rubacky.

The American Queen became operational 16 years ago and 2012 was the first year it ran cruises on the Ohio River. Floating along the river at 8 mph, Rubacky said, a steamboat cruise is like taking a step back in time, yet with all of the modern conveniences. On any of the cruises there is typically a daily stop at a town along the river for sightseeing, dining and other activities.

"It's almost like you're sailing through a river of Norman Rockwell books," Rubacky said. "This tugs at the heart-strings and emotions. It's unlike any ocean cruise ... It's America at its best."

Time to head for the hills.

If you want your feet more firmly planted on solid ground for your luxurious vacation then Hocking Hills may be a good option for you. The Hocking Hills region certainly offers its

share of rustic retreats, from sleeping in tents and cooking dinner over an open fire to spending the weekend in a dusty, cramped cabin. But just because you're out in the woods doesn't mean you have to forego such pleasures as a message, an elegant dinner or soaking in a hot tub.

The Hocking Hills area offers a variety of luxurious cabins and homes to stay in and, depending on where you stay, some of the cabins and retreats include spas, heated in-ground pools and media rooms with big-screen TVs and surround sound. For some of the more opulent accommodations out in the country, look to such getaways as Glenlaurel, Clay Bryn Castle, Black Ridge Cabins and Cherry Ridge Retreat, among others.

Glenlaurel has a Scottish theme and this year even opened a Scottish links-style golf course where players can replicate links-style golf from 100 years ago, playing on actual sand greens and tees, and using original hickory shaft clubs and sand tees. That's just a small part of the amenities available to spoil yourself. There's also a five-star restaurant that serves six-course meals during the week and seven-course meals on the weekend with a menu featuring such items as pheasant and rack of lamb.

Accommodations range from rooms and suites in the Manner House, which also houses the dining room, to individual two-room cottages nearby. In the cottages there are fireplaces in the living room and bedroom and a hot tub adjacent to the bedroom. Need a rub-down? A masseuse can give you a soothing massage right in your own room or at the on-site spa. "Our dining is luxurious. Our lodging is luxurious. We give you the royal treatment. You're treated like a king and queen when you're here," said Becky Russell, guest services director at Glenlaurel.

Glenlaurel, which caters to couples, is surrounded by its private 140 wooded acres with hiking trails available for guests only. Glenlaurel even has a heli-pad for those who want to fly in for the weekend. Rates for any of the six cottages, which all have different Scottish-based themes, is usually \$349 per night on the weekend and \$299 per night during the week.

There also are seven smaller cottages called “crofts” for \$299 per weekend night and \$249 per weeknight. Three suites and three guestrooms also are available. Russell warns that on popular weekends, such as New Year’s Eve or during foliage season or just about any summer weekend, Glenlaurel sells out quickly.

Not too far from Glenlaurel is the Cherry Ridge Retreat, which has three adult-only houses and four adult-only cottages that can accommodate two to eight guests. The Lake House is the most grandiose and can accommodate four couples. It has a giant stone fireplace, hot tub, 50-inch LCD

TV with a cathedral ceiling, rustic decor and lots of windows to allow for views of the adjacent woods and rolling hills. And the nearest public road is about a mile away.

Weekend rates at the Lake House vary from \$515 to \$815 per night depending on the number of guests. In-season (Memorial Day through Labor Day) cottage rates for a weekend night range from \$305 to \$320.

Want to bring the whole family along, or perhaps a couple of families? Then Cherry Ridge’s 6,200-square-foot Bourbon Lodge is the place for you. Bourbon Lodge has an in-ground



Getting your just desserts ...

For J.P. Odle the luxury of a Regent Seven Seas cruise can be described with a mention of his favorite dessert. “The food itself is something to behold with the way it is presented and if you don’t see something you like, you can get something else,” he says, adding that he and his wife are fond of Grand Marnier soufflé. “If you don’t see it on the menu, you can say: “On this day and this day and this day, I’d like the Grand Marnier soufflé.” And boy, it’s there.”

Odle is the president of Cincinnati-based Investments In Memories Inc., a travel agency that specializes in upscale vacations through luxury cruises, all-inclusive resorts and destination weddings. He said there are fundamental differences, including smaller ships, larger rooms and better food, that separate luxury cruising from cruises with a lower price point.

“What really sets them apart is the attention to detail,” Odle said, noting that a couple years ago the cruise industry was slammed with a disease epidemic. “Regent was almost militant in requiring that everyone use hand sanitizer before and after boarding the ship. And it’s still continued to this day.”

The line, whose most popular itineraries include a 22-night Rio de Janeiro to Miami voyage and a 15-night Rome to London sailing, features three vessels: the eight-deck, 700-guests Seven Seas Mariner, the nine-deck, 700-guests Seven Seas Voyager and the eight-deck, 490-guests Seven Seas Navigator. Described as “cruising as it was meant to be,” Regent boasts of providing guests with an all-inclusive experience. “A world where everything is included, without exception and without compromise,” the company contends.

Cruise fares for 7-day voyages, which start at about \$3,300 per person, include free round-trip air, unlimited shore excursions, one-night luxury hotel packages, unlimited fine wines and premium spirits and pre-paid gratuities. Ground transfers, 24-hour room service and welcome bottles of Champagne also are included. The ships feature up to four gourmet restaurants including the iconic steakhouse Prime 7.

“It is really the only truly ultra all-inclusive that I have ever seen,” Odle said. “If you want to have an appetizer on your balcony before dinner with some Galliano, Regent will do that. It’s what separates (them) from the herd a little bit.”

pool, a greatroom with a two-story stone fireplace, a 65-inch plasma TV, a theater room and a fully equipped gourmet kitchen with granite countertops and bar that seats four. There also is a pool table, poker table, a PS3 gaming system and outside there’s a 16-person in-ground hot tub, a poolside timber-framed pavilion and a fire pit. In-season rates for Bourbon Lodge, which can accommodate up to 24 people, range from \$1,889 per night for a single night to \$1,489 per night for three or more nights.

Pining for Pinehurst.

For a getaway a little farther away, how about one of the most iconic golf resorts in America? When combining a great history and great accommodations, few golf resorts are in Pinehurst’s league. Located in the small village of Pinehurst in the sandhills of North Carolina, the Pinehurst Resort is about an eight-hour drive from Columbus.

The resort has hosted four golf majors, the 1951 Ryder Cup and in 2014 will host the U.S. Open. It has eight golf courses, including the fabled Pinehurst No. 2, three hotels, an expansive day spa and several other leisure activities, including a nearby 200-acre private lake with a beach and swimming.

While the focus is on golf, there are plenty of other recreation options for active vacationers but to fully appreciate Pinehurst it’s important to know it’s history.

Pinehurst was the brainchild of soda fountain magnet James W. Tufts, who hired famed architect Frederick Law Olmstead to design the village of Pinehurst. The resort’s first hotel, the

Holly Inn, opened on New Year’s Eve in 1895 and has since hosted presidents, dignitaries and celebrities. The first golf course opened three years later. In 1901, The Carolina hotel opened. Now a historic landmark, the hotel still exudes the same southern charm and tradition that it did a century ago. Today guests can soak up Pinehurst’s history and still enjoy the spoils of the good life.

At The Carolina there are 230 four-diamond guest rooms including suites. The hotel’s expansive west lawn has a large swimming pool, a kiddie pool, an outdoor fireplace and a playground. Plus, it’s an easy walk to the Spa at Pinehurst Ah, yes, the Spa at Pinehurst, which offers an ideal atmosphere for self-indulgence. The Spa offers a host of botanical remedies. Its European-style body wraps feature locally harvested, mineral-rich Seagrove clay and its exfoliating scrubs are infused with precious Sandhills soil. There’s also a fitness center where yoga and Pilates sessions are available.

When it’s time to eat, Pinehurst has many delectable offerings, including its legendary breakfast buffet in The Carolina dining room, where piano music sets the tone as you feast on made-to-order omelets, fresh fruit and southern favorites. The only four-diamond rated restaurant in the region is the 1895 Grille at the Holly. The intimate dining room has a variety of fine dining menu items that can be capped by its specialty triple chocolate soufflé for dessert. Packages at Pinehurst range from \$399 to \$1,792 per night. ♣

... at sea

The cruise line, which has an elegant-casual dress code with optional formal and semi-formal attire on 16-night or longer voyages, typically draws in a more mature traveler. Odle said the average traveler is in his early 40s or older.

While South American cruises have become increasingly

attractive, Odle said Europe remains a sought-after destination. “Venice is still Disneyland for adults,” he said. For luxury cruise beginners, Odle recommends starting small with perhaps a seven-day sailing out of Florida but for those who want to go all out, he suggests a world cruise — at a mere \$60,000-\$70,000 per person. ♣



Yachts Of Choices When Looking For Luxury Boats



For many people, nothing says relaxation like floating along the water, hearing the quiet splashes against a boat and basking in the glow of a warm summer sun. Yes, being adrift in a lake, river or ocean can be transforming, but even more so if it's in a large, luxurious boat — not a fishing boat, not a kayak. No, to really enjoy the water at its best with all of its serenity and peacefulness, you need to go big. How big? We're talking 30-, 40- and even 50-foot yachts with all of the amenities of home: comfortable interior seating areas, kitchens, bedrooms, showers and big-screen TVs. "With a lot of the larger boats, it's as comfortable as sitting in your living room," said Mike Simonis, a Northern Ohio boat broker.

And if you so choose, you don't even have to leave Ohio to live the yachting life. Along the shores of Lake Erie, especially in the Sandusky and Port Clinton areas halfway between Toledo and Cleveland, it's not uncommon to see behemoth yachts cruise along the shore, catching the eyes of onlookers. Most of the time the boaters use the yachts for simple day trips or weekend getaways, perhaps out to Kelley's Island or South Bass Island, home of resort town Put-In-Bay, in Lake Erie.

"You'll see a lot of families going to the islands, the beaches. From Catawba Island to Cedar Point (Amusement Park) it's only a 40-minute ride," said Simonis. "They'll go to the islands and spend the weekend there ... they can put the kids in the aft cabin and sit in the back and have a few cocktails."

Although some people opt to keep their yacht moving while relaxing, others just want to find a nice place to sit and enjoy nature, said John Sima, owner of Sima Marine in Port Clinton. "There are those who will take three or four weeks off and go up to northern (Lake) Huron and Lake Michigan (and) to some people it's a floating cottage. They'll leave it docked and hardly go anywhere," said Sima.

What will it cost you to purchase a floating vacation home? A relatively newer used boat in the 30- to 60-foot range will easily carry a six-figure pricetag. Sima said he recently had for sale a 57-foot 2003 Carver 570 Yacht priced at \$499,500. That boat, besides the typical amenities, even had a washer and dryer, and its master bedroom had its own bathroom and shower.

Most luxury boats, he said, even the smaller ones, come with heat and air conditioning. Some even offer auto tracking satellite TV reception and Internet service. That's nice, but who wants all play and no work?

"It can be a floating office. You can spend a week out on the boat and have everything you need to have a floating office," said Sima. "We had one boat, about \$1 million, with a custom-built office."

Be careful, however, if you decide to get a boat. Sima warns it can be contagious. "It's a lifestyle for a lot of people ... I like to say, as a joke, it's a disease," he said. ♣

By Rick Adamczak

A Spirited Conversation

Sometimes we walk into a bar to kick back with a favorite beverage, sometimes we browse the specialty drinks and sometimes we take the opportunity to sample a little something before we lay out the big money to buy an entire bottle for our home bars. Yet another option: Sometimes we become mesmerized by the beautiful bottle sitting all alone on the top shelf and ask with curiosity that reflects our desire to sample, "What's that?!" Yes, my friends, it happens.

A few of those eye-catching bottles literally are works of art reflecting the prized spirits inside. Such is the case with Hennessy Richard Extra Cognac and Louis XIII de Remy Martin, Grande Champagne Cognac.



Hennessy, McCallan, & Johnnie Walker

Cognac

Some say Hennessy Richard Extra Cognac and Remy Martin's Louis XIII are comparable products. Let your taste buds and wallet decide. Hennessy Richard is a blend of more than 100 brandies, some dating to the 19th century. Its flavor is said to be balanced, yet complex with a vanilla aroma and notes of pepper mingled with flowers. With a price tag of just over \$3,600 in Ohio, this elixir offers a taste that is both spicy and fruity with an oak-influenced undertone. When the cognac is consumed, the vessel that held it, a beautiful hand-crafted Baccarat carafe, will let the memory live on.

In 1830 the first Remy Martin Grande Champagne Cognac was created and its rich legacy has continued through many years and across many nations. Today, the spirit is indeed considered royalty as each bottle is a blend of 1,200 cognacs that range from 40 to 100 years old. The deep amber color offers aromas of flowers, fruits and spices and tastes that hint of lychee, ginger, cigars and cinnamon. Like the Hennessy Richard decanter, this cognac too is presented in a hand-crafted Baccarat work of art. In Ohio, Louis XIII retails for nearly \$2,200 a bottle.

Scotch

Cognac, of course, is not everyone's proverbial cup of tea. For those Scotch aficionados among us, the names Macallan and Johnnie Walker are far more familiar. The Macallan offers a Single Malt Scotch that is made entirely from malted barley. Johnnie Walker, on the other hand, is a Blended Malt Scotch made from up to 35 individual whiskies carefully selected by the distiller's Master Blender.

By Cindy Shillingburg

There are several varieties of Scotch whiskeys, and personal preference will determine which taste is most desirable, but there are a couple of things they all have in common, according to The Macallan. In order to be classified as Scotch, the spirit, made from a mash of cereals, must be matured in an oak cask in Scotland for a minimum of three years. The finished product then must be bottled at a minimum strength of 40 percent by volume.

Macallan 30-year Highland Single Malt Scotch is characterized by its rich amber color, buttery aroma and a flavor that has hints of raisins, nutmeg, cinnamon and other harvest spices as well as chocolate and orange. In Ohio, it sells for a little more than \$1,300. No handcrafted bottle with this incarnation of Macallan but if you'd like to add a few thousand (add between \$14,000 and \$18,000, to be more precise) you might be able to find The Macallan 55 Year Old in Lalique. The exquisite crystal container contains one of Macallan's rarest whiskies. Online auction houses may be your best bet for finding this unique combination. Macallan's Curious Small Stills Lalique decanter with 60-year-old Scotch is perhaps an even more attractive piece and with a value of \$20,000 is just slightly more expensive than the 55-year-old bottle.

If those goodies are a little out of your budget, you might want to opt for Johnnie Walker's Blue Label. This smooth-as-silk Scotch is heralded as Johnnie Walker's rarest and most exclusive blend. Released in 1992, Blue Label is considered an ultimate luxury Scotch Whiskey and is created from "the most unique and premium" whiskies in the world. It tastes of cinnamon, pepper, berries, sweet peat and has a beautiful smokiness. Known as the whisky for connoisseurs, each Blue Label bottle is individually numbered. In Ohio, a bottle of Blue Label will cost around \$235.

White Spirits

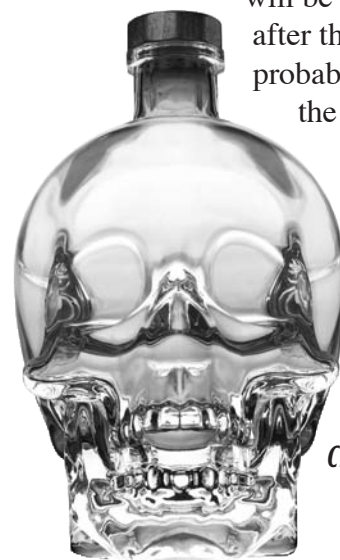
Last, but not least, let's look at some white spirits. Gran Patron Platinum Tequila has a crisp aroma of fresh agave, citrus and fruit. It tastes of citrus, black pepper and light oak. The "perfect" platinum tequila comes in a handcrafted crystal

bottle that is hand signed and numbered, then placed in a sleek, sculpted black box that makes a gorgeous silk-lined display case. Don't waste this nectar on margaritas; it's for the true tequila connoisseur. The price in Ohio is approximately \$195.

For the most expensive gin that can be purchased in Ohio, ergo the most expensive martini, Nolet's Silver Gin comes in at about \$50 a bottle. Crafted in Holland, this dry gin has notes of Turkish rose, peach and raspberry that create a combination the distiller says has never before been used in gin. A little gin, cracked ice and a twist of lemon produces a martini Nolet's says is a taste for "a new generation."

For those who prefer a vodka martini, which some will argue is not really a martini, Crystal Head produces one of the most expensive vodkas available in Ohio. Another spirit available for those on a more humble budget, it costs approximately \$50 per bottle — and the bottle is a big part of the attraction. Indiana Jones fans probably remember his movie focused on crystal skulls ... those skulls are the catalyst for these bottles. The vodka is made from the purist waters from Newfoundland, Canada and contains no glycol, no citrus and no raw sugar, unlike many competitors' brands. It is quadruple-distilled and filtered through 500-million year-old quartz crystals. The distillers say that perhaps because the filtering crystals share the raw material from which the original crystal heads were carved, they are thought to have similar spiritual qualities. That

will be up to the drinker to decide after the first martini — it probably isn't wise to wait until the fourth to make such a determination. ♣



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